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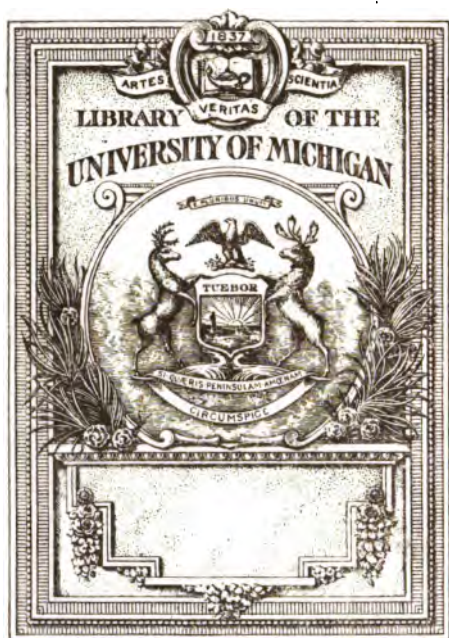
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BROOKDOWN
& OTHER POEMS

THE WILLIAM MORRIS PRESS LTD.
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M A N C H E S T E R

BROOKDOWN & OTHER POEMS

By ·

EGBERT J. SANDFORD



London ·

Erskine Macdonald

MCMXV

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July 1916

THE LITTLE BOOKS *of* GEORGIAN VERSE

A SERIES OF ORIGINAL VOLUMES : EACH DEVOTED TO A SINGLE AUTHOR
S E L E C T E D B Y S . G E R T R U D E F O R D

Brookdown
and other Poems ++

BY

ECBERT T. SANDFORD



ERSKINE MACDONALD : PUBLISHER
LONDON, W.C. : MCMXV



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I N T R O D U C T I O N

MR. EGBERT J. SANDFORD describes himself as "just an ordinary working man," whose whole effort, so far as his art is concerned, is to "take the common things of life and weave them into song." How far he has succeeded in this effort may be gathered from the fact that a number of the poems here collected have appeared in the *Spectator*, the *Poetry Review*, the *Westminster Gazette* and *Great Thoughts*. The poem to his brother bard, the street salesman Mr. Wm. Shepperley, is reprinted from the *Evening Standard*. To the editors of these papers our thanks are due for their courtesy in permitting republication.

In his working hours Mr. Sandford is a storehouseman at Plymouth, and is at present employed in that capacity under the Government. The chief literary influences in his life have been William Blake and Francis Thompson, and a literary class at Blackheath has been his chief means of encouragement and inspiration. To one of its talented lecturers—Mr. Albert A. Cock, B.A.—he owes the friendly notice of Mr. Strachey, editor of the *Spectator*. Several other critics have since given him a generous meed of praise.

S. GERTRUDE FORD.

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A D E D I C A T I O N

*T*O my loved Land
In shine or shower ;
In hallowed calm
Or tempest wild :
To every bird
And every flower—
To any little child.

MORNING, Love, and skies are grey:
By your window breezes play,
Whilst the Tamar wends its way
To the Sea.

Noonday, Love, and skies are fair:
Hedgerows glisten : everywhere
Bird and bud and blossom bear
News for me.

Evening, Love, and skies are red :
Earthward leans the daisy's head—
God bends low about its bed,
Mindful, He—

Night, Love, Night, and skies are blue :
Hosts of Stars are peeping through,
He Who guards the daisies, too,
Shelters thee.

TO THE YOUNG CHILD : PEACE

*T*HIS is thy Mother's hour.
And though she lack the needful wealth
Of strength to bear, thou hast the power
To free thyself.

Where cannons boom
Their hell-made music from the Gates of Doom,
Where Murder waits to mutilate earth's morn—
Leap thou!—and, in the very lap of Gloom,
Dare to be born!

A B R A V E B I R D

I STOOD awhile and watched the clouds go by.
'Twas like the silent march-past of a storm—
That mighty army, captained by the Sun,
Frowned its full fury, until one by one
My powers made will with my half frightened form.

The wind-thrilled West seemed terror-filled—and I?—
I feared its bringing.
Next moment, 'neath that very self-same sky,
A lark came—singing !

TWILIGHT AT BROOKDOWN

*D*AY is at its fall.
From field and farm and pen
The cattle call.

Dew-steeped shadows swing :
From grove and glade and glen
The wild-birds sing.

A call ?—
A song ?—Ah me, and is that all ?
O mighty man bring thou thy share
Of thankfulness—Lo ! everywhere
The wild birds and the cattle pray their prayer.

TIME gave me a leaf
From the great tree of grief.
Friends framed it in fears :
I stained it, with tears.

Then, fully aware
Of its bringing, I took
And placed it with care
'Tween the folds of Life's Book.

Years after my pain
I sought it again—
That little green leaf
From the great tree of Grief—

All withered and old ?—
Nay—charms, manifold—
And colour ?—like gold.

TURN my body towards the sun . . .
 Its light and its laughter shall be spun
 To a part of me and my little one.

How shall I train these hard, rough hands
 To bind those little swaddling bands ? . . .
 And how shall I train these longing eyes
 To look, with compassion, when it cries ? . . .
 How shall I live from this wonder-filled Now—
 Till I see my babe ? . . . Let me tell you how.—

Through all the strange months that must roll
 Upon Time's flood until that day—
 I'll strive to mother every soul
 Who comes within my way . . .
 Then, be the waiting calm or wild,
 'Twill make me ready for that glad morn—
 For how can a woman bear a child
 If she, herself, has not been born ?

WHAT MY ISAIAH SAITH

IS thy soul strange with waiting, wonder-wild ?
Behold, a mighty Mother is with child.
E'en now her babe doth leap within the womb—
The time of her delivery is at hand.

In that near day—
Say—who shall stand ?
Shall Fears ?
Shall Tears ?
Will Grief be there, and her sad sister Gloom ?
Nay, for these are they
Who, from that great, glad hour, will flee away.

“ Rejoice ! rejoice ” O Brother Mine—“ rejoice !
Lift up thy voice ! ”—
There yet shall come to thee new strength for
 strife ;
And, into thine own life,
A larger life.

“ Rejoice ! rejoice !
Again I say—rejoice ! ”
Feel thy frail self wax strong—
For Sorrow shall bring forth ! lo ! she shall bear
To thee an offspring, fair—
That one for whom thy world hath waited long—
And men shall call it by the name of Song.

THE JOB THAT IS WITHIN ME

I WILL not curse the Rod—
This Rod—
Nor fear to tell
That I have surely trod
The fire-strewn floors of Hell . . .

Dark—densely dark, o'erhead :
And darker still the way I have to tread.

Behind—
The howling wind.
Before—
A closed door.

O heart of mine—be strong !
Make for thyself a song !
And thou, my soul,
Take full control . . . !
Stand up, and face this hour with tempests torn—
Sing, and new strength shall greet thee with
the Morn !

D O Y O U R P A R T

IF you will run
You may win the race ;
But, should you lose,
'Twill be no disgrace—You run !

If you will sing
Just one sweet song
Through sunny days
Or nights that are long ;
What tho' the world
Never hears that song—You sing !

If you will love
And with purpose firm,
O'er a fallen brother yearn—
What matter though
E'en some should spurn
Your heart's best gift,
And no love return—You love !

DEEP from a day, as sunless as 'twas lone,
 There came a voice,
 Saying to her : "Rejoice !
 Not every child is formed of flesh and bone.

" So, when his eyes are bruised and stained with
 tears,
 Do thou bring forth sweet Laughter. When
 wild fears
 Assail his soul, then let thy little one
 Be Joy ; and bid thy children run—
 Run straight to him.—Ah ! dost thou know—
 Thine offspring shall wax strong
 And thou, thyself, shalt go
 From strength to strength, with them. E'en
 though
 Thou couldst not be the mother of his son,
 Thou still mayst be the Mother of his Song."

C O M E O N, L I F E !

COME on, Life ! Come, crown or
crush me ;

Frown your fiercest frown, or rush me
To the fairest of your plains.

Sing me songs of joy or sadness—
Weave me worlds midst gloom or gladness—
Pelt me with your rains.

Clouds may rail or prance their proudest—
Winds may wail or laugh their loudest—
Wreckage strew high-road or dell.

When my way no light can borrow—
Save where the smould'ring torch of sorrow
Fans to flame fresh fires of hell !

Even then, I'll not deny thee ;
But, the rather, keep close by thee,
Ever undismayed.

Come on Life ! to calm or rush me—
Bring your *all*, then—crown or crush me—
I am not afraid !

CONCERNING A BROTHER BARD

(MR. WM. SHEPPERLEY—THE AUTHOR OF A CHOICE LITTLE VOLUME OF VERSE
—GETS HIS LIVING BY SELLING SWEETS NEAR THE STRAND, LONDON)

*H*E stands in the streets
The whole day long,
Selling his sweets
And singing his song.

Thus is each part
Right nobly played ;
The one—his loved Art :
The other—his trade.

True happiness greets
All men in Life's throng
Found selling their sweets
And singing their song.

THE DEAD WARRIOR
SUNDAY : NOVEMBER 15TH : 1914

T WAS meet that he, the tired One and the true,
Should pass to his eternal Rest
Near to the blood-besprinkled breast
Of Waterloo.

Many who trod
The shell-torn trenches yesterday
Are marching past the Great White Throne of
God
To-day.

From near and far
They come, and at their head—
Covered with well-earned glory, be it said—
ROBERTS OF KANDAHAR.

M O T H E R N A T U R E

I.

*I*N hallowed bowers
She broodeth o'er her little ones—the flowers.

The tiny birds—
Alike she cares for them ; and flocks and herds.

All creeping things
Find food and shelter, 'neath her mighty wings.

II.

Her nursling wild,
I glory that she owns me for a child.

By night and day
I long that I might follow in the way

Her feet have trod.
The call of Nature is the call of God.

*T*HOU strange interpreter of gloom and
glee!

Where mournful mirth and mirthful misery
Go hand in hand.

Where sorrow strays
Atween a myriad band
Of hopes and fears—

Where laughter plays
Her wonted game of hide-and-seek with tears.

MAN-GROWN,
Yet he doth own
A child-like soul.

His heart—
A tiny part
Of Nature's whole.

Each day
He wends Life's way
'Midst smiles or tears—

The Song
He sings along
That way—God hears.

LISTENING TO THE WIND

GOD is at the Organ!
I can hear
A mighty music
Echoing, far and near.

God is at the Organ!
And its keys
Are rolling waters, storm-strewn moorlands,
Trees.

God is at the Organ!
I can hear
A mighty music
Echoing, far and near.

A T M E M O R Y ' S G A T E

EARLY and late
I watch and wait
At Memory's Gate.

As I peer through,
Friends I once knew
Throng the dim view.

Far down the way
Wee children stray,
And talk and play :
They seem so near
I almost hear
The words they say—
I know I trace
Each tiny face.

O moments rare !
Dear vision fair !—
Loved ones are there !

Some day I know
That I shall go
To where they dwell.
Till then ! Ah !—well—
Early and late
I'll watch and wait
At Memory's Gate.

I M P R O M P T U

(AFTER SEEING A PRINT OF THE PHOTO OF FRANCIS THOMPSON,
TAKEN WITH HIS SISTERS AND THEIR DOLLS : : : : 1870)

SINCE first it was my privilege to scan
His more matured picture,* I did plan
To sing me thus: Man calleth unto Man.

But now—

(O richer, rarer Now!)

I joy

That from Time's steep,

Across the song-swept bosom of Death's deep—

Boy calleth unto Boy!

* Photo taken in 1894

W I L L I A M B L A K E
(B O R N N O V E M B E R 2 8 T H 1 7 5 7)

*E*ARTH'S full with thy fame ;
Whilst Melody throngs
At the sound of thy name.

Poor tribute I bring—
This frail verse wondering
Art thou making new songs
For the Angels to sing ?

TO ANY BROTHER BARD

DOST thou lose heart ?
Mark

How Dawn and Light and Dusk and Dark
Do play their part.

Are disappointments hurled
Across thy world ?—

Speed—

With thine own work in thine own day,—
Till all who come within thy way
Shall give thee heed.

WOUNDED, yet unafraid,
I steered my bark
Into Night's haven,
And I found out Dark.

She welcomed me—
This Mother of the Stars—
She gave me balm
For all my scars—
My scars that Light had made.

GREAT Master—Song !
The Stars have had thee long—
And they are strong !

Canst thou not see ?—
Here Poesy's flowers low-lie
Upon this very spot Grief stands,
And Sorrow too—both wave their hands ;
They beckon thee,
They hold that thou wilt their deliverer be.

Labour is lonely—She doth daily cry :
“ Except he come, my little ones must die !”

O my Beloved Master—Song ?
The Stars are strong !
And they have had thee long—
Too long !

T W I N S O N G S

DAWN.

LIGHT breaking—
Morn waking—
Flowers at my feet !

Birds singing—
Air ringing
With voices sweet.

DARK.

Hearts throbbing—
Winds sobbing—
Birds seek their bed !

Dusk falling—
Night calling—
Stars overhead !

T H E W I L D M A N

*H*E claims, for his frail form,
A part with storm.
He calls the wind his brother
And our great earth his mother ;
Counts it a moment's bliss
To throw a Star a kiss.

MINDING BABY BORDISS

*T*HERE is a blue,
Fairer, by far,
Than all the blue
Of Ocean's bar.

Nor is it found
In Flora's round ;
Nor Summer's skies—
It is the blue—
The soft, sweet blue,
Of children's eyes.

S T R I F E A N D S O N G

SAID Life
To Strife—
Whom wilt thou have for Wife ?

Said Strife
To Life
I will have Song for Wife
And, tho' seeming strange my choice,
Sorrow's sons will rise to bless me,
Love and Labour both confess me ;
Thou, too, shalt rejoice.

THE NAMELESS ONE

*H*E passed from his home at the last
hour of night,
Friends questioned his motive, his
honour, his right.
They loathed the strange path that his firm
footsteps sped ;
But a Soul was made white
With the words that he said ;
And, straight from her Sin-laden Sorrow, she fled.
Few knew her Saviour ; none understood, quite,
Why this man loved darkness rather than light.

THE DEATH OF NIGHT

NIGHT raised his sullen self and tossed
his head.

“I will not rest,” he said,
“Until I find Dawn at my doorway, dead.”

“I will beget me children. They shall run
Through every road of life. Light shall
become

Afraid of me. I'll strike ALL music dumb.”
Just then, an unknown Singer came along
And stabbed him, with a Song.

THE WILD ONE'S GIFT

ONLY a spark
Brought back from the dark ;
Yet it served as a flame
For others who came,
At dead of their night,
In search of a light.

GREAT IN THEIR LITTLENESS

*T*HE faintest star in darkest night
Adds light unto the realms of light.

The smallest wave that breasts the sea
Helps with the ocean's melody.

The frailest flower that decks earth's sod
Lends lustre to the feet of God.

*I*T matters not—
My manner, nor my form—
Whether I came of Silence, or was got
Within the womb of Storm.

I wander where the sun-steeped cloudlets roam,
And where wild skies wage warfare with mad
foam ;
Midst calm or wreckage of all woodland-kind.

I triumph over death,—
Call me no more by that weird name of Wind !
Call me God's Breath !

S O N G O N R A I N

I F I wander in a garden
Where birds throng,
I just listen to the music
Of their song.

And should passing storm-clouds drive me
Home again,
I just listen to the music
Of the rain.

Whether storm-cloud bursts above me
Or bird sings,
I am thankful for the music
Either brings.

MIDNIGHT — AND ALONE

*M*Y Soul—
Secrete thyself awhile within this dark ;
And, it shall be to thee a fortress strong.

Behold, the very shadows keep
Time, in their swaying, with Dawn's deathless
song.

Hark
To the Dream-gods, as they dance with Sleep—
Joy pays Grief's toll.

Know then that, though the waiting hours seem
long,
To-morrow's coming will be well with thee—
For out upon the fields of Silence roll
Mists of Melody.

SUNDAY BEFORE EASTER
(I N T H E L A N E)

No palm
With which to wave Him welcome
Should He pass ?
And do thy frail hands yearn ?

Lo ! here are blades of grass—
Three celandines—
A bruised primrose,
And a piece of broken fern.

I.
LIVE ! live ! live !
They only die
Who never try
To live.

II.
Whoso cometh to our earth
Along the way that we call Birth ;
And walks the paths of Pain and Play,
Working his work within his day,
Doth come to stay.

III.
Hark !
I hear God say,
Behold, I stand for day !
Not night :
For light !
Not dark.

W H E N W E ' R E A P A R T

NIGHT doth declare
My love everywhere.
Dream-gods aver
The glad-coming of Her.

So when men say
Concerning the day—
Its brightness—"How bright!"
I go my lone way,
Dark's outcast, to pray,
Cursing the light.

TO THE MOTHER OF MY SON (3 I.vii.xi)

I.

ALONG the winding pathway of the years
We two have come.
Whilst some
Have left me to the mercy of Time's tide
Thou hast kept bravely onward by my side ;
Bearing with my failures and my fears—
Cheering my successes and my song—
Weeping o'er the stains of all my wrongs,
Till washed white with thy tears.

From sunlit days
To darkest nights,
Thy feet have trod
Faith's fairest ways
Or loneliest heights.
Each yearning of thy spotless Soul
Has entered Heaven, to take control of God.

I read His Word, where He doth say
Of such as thou art—"When they pray
I cannot, dare not, say them nay,
Who thus My Will obey."

If, at life's end, thou should'st be first to greet
The Mercy-Seat
I know thou'lt pause
And plead, for me, my cause—
And Christ will all compassion take,
And pardon for the pleader's sake.

II.

Go ! stand with her who ever nobly stood
In love-like manner to her love-sent son—
For both, in bonds of Mighty Motherhood,
Are one.

Perchance, when memory only holds thee dear,
And skies are black above,
A sorrow shall o'ertake our own—may be that he
Will come to some lone Calvary
Of pain and loss ;
Where shadows loom,
Where friends all fail,
Where outer-darkness doth prevail,
And gloom greets gloom :
E'en then, he shall not fear
For thou wilt tarry near
His Cross.

And every prayer
Which thou hast said
Long days before
Shall gather there
About his head—
And more :
When all life's thorns would pierce his brow
He shall prove then, what I know now—
How steadfast is thy love.

W H A T S H A L L I D O ?

W H A T shall I do
When you are far away ?
This will I do :—

Each time I pray,
I'll always say
A prayer for you—

Dear—
God will hear.

HER PRAYER—FOR HIM

I DO not ask that he may never yield
When fighting on the foam or on the field,
Since this I know :—
Where'er his country calls my man will go.

I only pray
That while he is away
You guard and guide him day by day !
And give me strength to tend his little ones
Until he comes.

On land or sea,—
Wherever he may be,
God, kiss my man for me !

A F T E R W A R D S

GOOD-BYE, Trenches,
Glory-rife !

Good-bye wee Ones,
Good-bye Wife . . . !

Ready, Death ?
Let go, Breath . . . !

. . . Hullo Wife . . . !
Hullo Wee Ones . . . !
. . . Hullo Life !



THINKING OF HER

GOD! how long
Shall song
Be forced to wander hand in hand with Pain?
Now—whilst the dread hour steals her strength;
And strange fear-fashioned shadows fall full
length
About her bed—
Do Thou bid our Holy Brother
Jesus, and His Holy Mother,
'Tend her in my stead.
And, should Sleep's sweet angel miss her
In the darkness, dear God—kiss her—
Kiss her well again!



A L I T T L E W H I L E

A LITTLE while—
O such a little while,
And then—the bliss of this :
To hold your hands again,
To greet you, smile for smile
And kiss for kiss.

So, dearest, when
The shadows of a dim mean-time encroach,
When dread-filled darknesses approach,
I'll open wide these eyes, and look away
To that near day.
And ever after
My whole way along
Shall glow with colour and shall ring with song.

Life looms with laughter :
God fills our world with gladness to the brim.
Love, shall we leave each other, that wee while
With Him ?

I F I S H O U L D D I E

IF I should die
Before you, dear,
God knows that I
Would be so lonely in that other Land;
Yet, I am sure that He would understand,
And have permission given
That I might wander in and out of Heaven
To meet you, here.

Love, shall I tell you where to look for me
In that dim day?—
Not in the silent grave-yard way,
Through which grim ghosts of sorrow stray,
I shall not tarry there—
Come to a sunlit bush or tree,
To wind-swept moor, to storm-lashed sea;
By brook, or bank, or flower, or star,
And, where the stained-with-struggle are—
Look for me there! Look for me there!

S A T I S F I E D

I'VE defied flood and fire,
Trode mountain and mire;
Of my sorrows and songs freely given—

I have swung me, in state,
At the top of Hell's gate—
I have played in the streets of Heaven.

E'EN tho' at times thou canst not trace
One soul with which thy soul can pace
The winding road,
Shoulder thy load :

And, when Life's winds blow east or north
Be brave, my brother man—stand forth !
Look God full in the face !

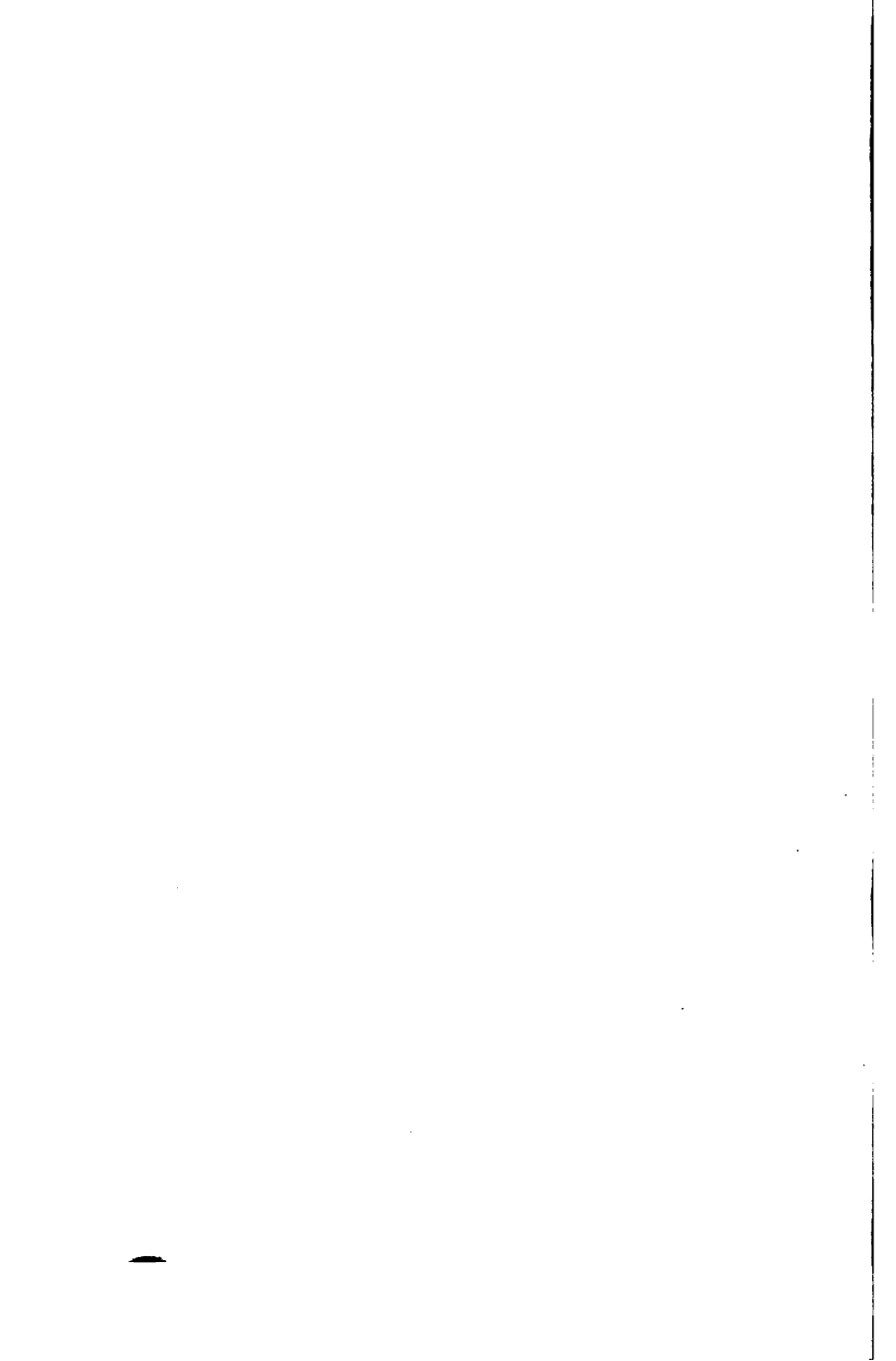
SHE spread the cloth for two
And placed his chair.
Then cried : " How silly !
Why, I thought that he was here."

At length there came a letter,
Saying : " Dear,
Did you find me yesterday ?
. . . . How I did pray
That I might meet you
In our wee home-way"

Ah, then she knew
Why she had placed his chair,
And plate, and cup and saucer . . .
He was there.

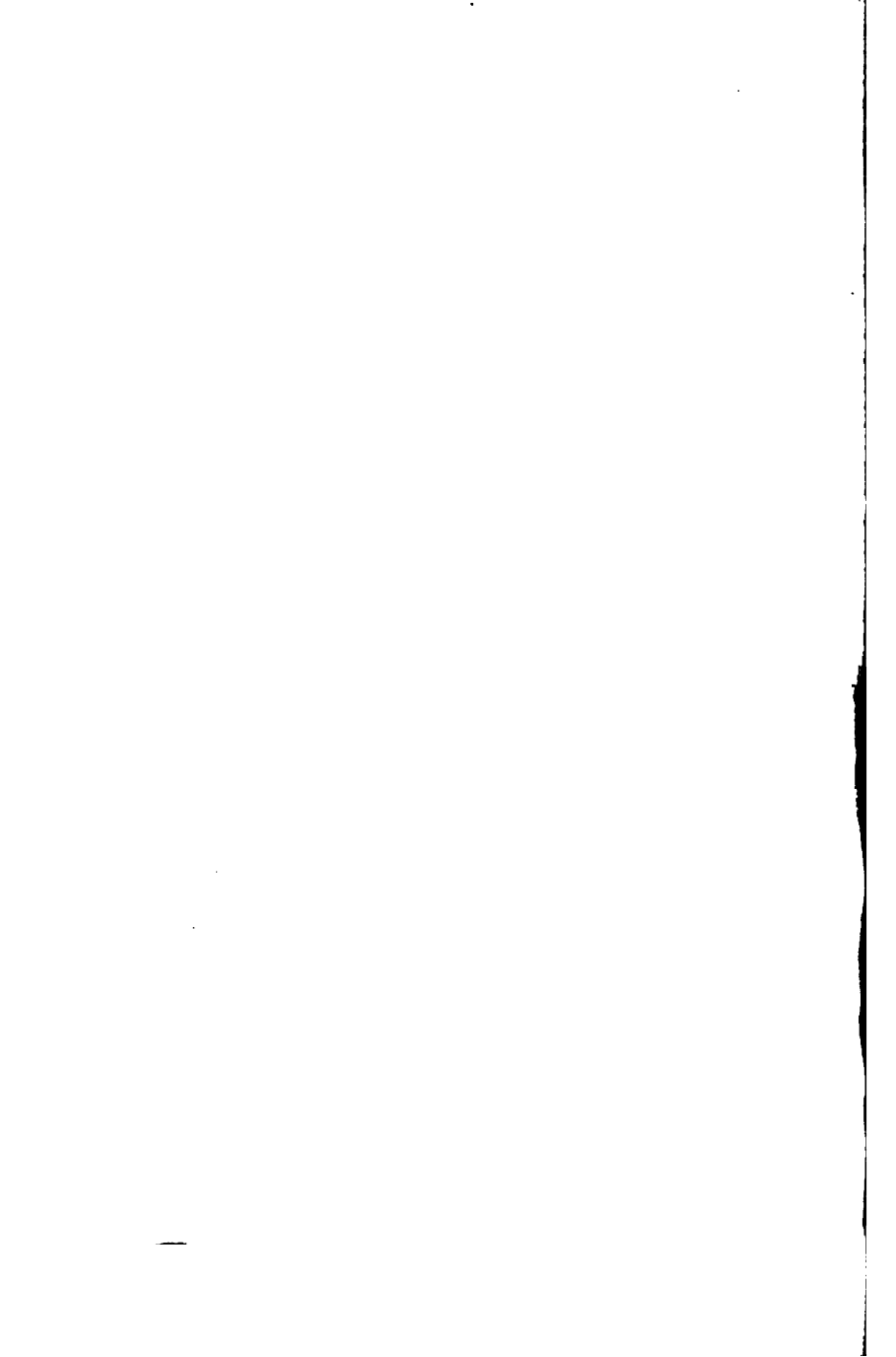


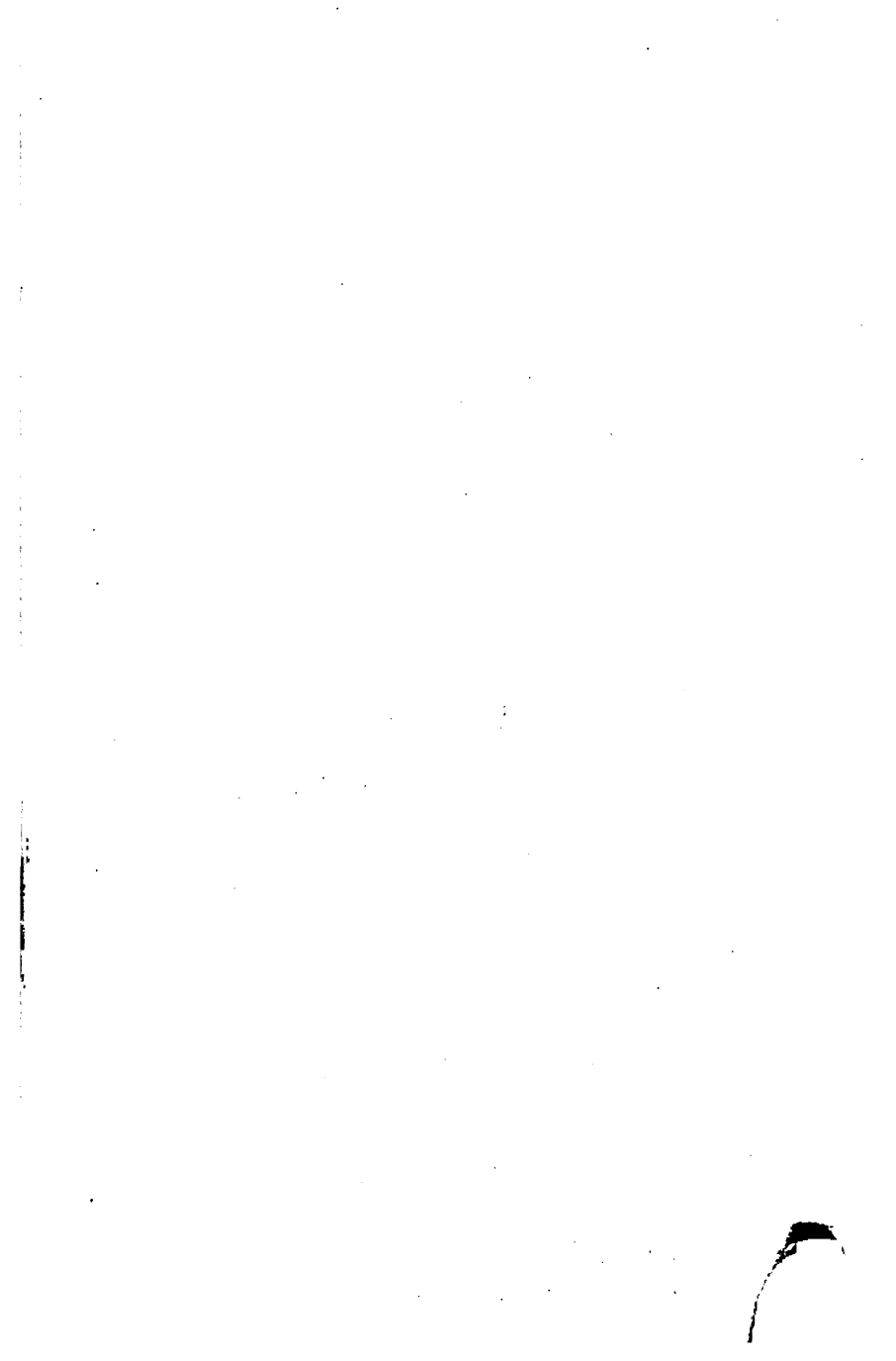




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